

~~-YALE COLLEGE-~~ DEMOCRATS

March 4, 2015

Testimony of Michael Zanger-Tishler
Member, Yale College Democrats

300 Chapel Street, 52 d
New Haven, CT 06511

In favor: S.B. No. 858:
An Act Concerning Employees Who Customarily And Regularly Receive
Gratuities and the Minimum Fair Wage

My name is Michael Zanger-Tishler and I am a freshman at Yale College, and I strongly urge the committee to vote in favor of S.B. No. 858 on behalf of the Yale College Democrats.

I support this bill because of the importance reducing the tip credit would have on my friends, many of whom worked jobs where they received tips in high school and continue to do so in college in order to pay for expenses. Even as a young person studying at a university with generous financial aid, I still know students at Yale who rely on tipped wage jobs whether during the academic year or the summer. The fact that they have to make up a portion of their wage using tips adds an element of unpredictability to their financial situation and this adds unneeded stress to their lives. Tipped workers are disproportionately young people. People below the age of thirty make up fifty five percent of tipped workers and sixty six percent of waiters nationally.

However, it is not just students who are affected by this unpredictability. Tipped workers are overwhelmingly women, almost seventy three percent of them, and according to a study from the Economic Policy Institute, tipped workers are more than twice as likely to fall under the federal poverty line. Waiters, according to the same study, are more than three times more likely to fall under the federal poverty line. Part of this is due to the instability inherent in this type of work, and the group of people these jobs affect are precisely the type of workers who need more stability rather than less. Only a few weeks ago, New York City raised the minimum wage for tipped workers and other states, such as California, have no distinction between the minimum wage for tipped workers and the general minimum wage. Connecticut passed a minimum wage increase last year recognizing the importance increasing minimum wages has to so many people in the state, and it makes no sense to leave tipped workers behind.

As a religious person, I am remind of what *Rabeinu Yonah*, a thirteenth century rabbi, wrote in one of his books called *sefer hayirah*. He wrote, in regards to the Jewish approach to labor practices, that "If you want to hire laborers and you find that they are poor, they should be regarded as poor members of your household, and do not degrade them, for you were commanded to have a respectful manner with them and to pay their wages." While this is a lofty standard to strive for, the idea that every worker and person is entitled to dignity and the security of a household is a religious imperative that I think about almost every day. Very often it is difficult to think about how to achieve this ideal. However, a good place to start would be

passing S.B. 858 to increase the financial security and stability of the people in the state who need it the most.